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Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization

Report of the Secretary-General

Background

1. By its resolution 48/2 of 13 October 1993, the General Assembly granted observer status to the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

2. ECO participated in the fiftieth anniversary commemorative session of the General Assembly, in 1995.

3. In its resolution 50/1 of 12 October 1995, the General Assembly affirmed the need to strengthen cooperation between entities of the United Nations system and ECO in the areas of economic and social development. In the same resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its fifty-first session a report on the implementation of the resolution and decided to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-first session the item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization". Accordingly, the Secretary-General submitted a progress report to the Assembly at its fifty-first session (A/51/265 and Add.1).

4. In its resolution 51/21 of 27 November 1996, the General Assembly urged the specialized agencies and other organizations and programmes of the United Nations system to initiate, maintain and increase consultation and programmes with ECO and its associated institutions in the attainment of their objectives. It called upon the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), as the regional arm of the United Nations having all States members of ECO as its members, to assume a specific role in promoting cooperation with ECO. It requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its fifty-second session a report on the implementation of the resolution and decided to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-second session the item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization".

5. In pursuance of the above, a brief summary of the present status of cooperative relationships between ECO and various organizations of the United Nations system is given below.

United Nations Development Programme

6. ECO and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) signed a memorandum of understanding at Islamabad on 13 March 1995. Since the signing of the memorandum, many joint activities have been undertaken. UNDP provided the services of a consultant to ECO to carry out a study on the reorganizational aspects of the ECO secretariat. The study was used by the eminent persons group as reference material on enhancing the effectiveness of ECO. A UNDP consultant is currently carrying out a study on the complementarities of the economies of member States. In

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order to collect requisite information/data for the said study, the UNDP consultant visited the ECO secretariat and its member States. Based on the information/material collected, the consultant has drawn up a comprehensive draft. An initial review of the draft brought to the fore the need for some additions and modifications in the contents of the study. When completed, the study will serve as a valuable resource material for future studies, programmes, plans and projects.

7. UNDP is also undertaking efforts together with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to enable ECO to benefit from the Advanced Cargo Information System (ACIS) and the Automated System for Customs Data and Management (ASYCUDA) within the general framework of the project prepared by ESCAP on international transport development in the ECO region.

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

8. ECO and ESCAP signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation at Istanbul on 7 July 1993. Several joint activities have been organized by ECO and ESCAP since then. During 1993, ESCAP actively participated in the preparation of an outline plan for the development of the transport sector in the ECO region. A joint seminar was held at Tehran on the accession of States members of ECO to the international conventions on road and rail transport. ECO and ESCAP are presently working on the possibility of holding a round-table conference on the mining industry and minerals. Efforts are under way to identify a source of funding for this activity. A transit treaty framework for the ECO region is being worked out in collaboration with UNCTAD. A study on the investment and trade opportunities between the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and ECO regions is being worked out by ESCAP in close contact with ASEAN and ECO.

9. ESCAP also coordinated two meetings of the heads of subregional organizations at Bangkok and Jakarta in February 1994 and January 1995, respectively. The third consultative meeting of the heads of the subregional organizations was held at Tehran on 18 and 19 May 1997, jointly hosted by ECO and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. A number of useful and constructive suggestions/proposals emanated as the outcome of the discussions focused on the priority areas of trade and investment, transport and communications, human resources development and poverty alleviation.

10. ECO attaches high priority to transport and communications. In this sector, ESCAP, UNCTAD and Islamic Development Bank are currently finalizing a comprehensive joint project on international transport development in the ECO region.

11. Another development that took place in this regard was the holding of an extraordinary summit meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the States members of ECO at Ashgabat on 13 and 14 May 1997. The highlight of the meeting was the adoption of the Ashgabat Declaration reiterating the importance of transport, communication and gas and the oil pipeline network for the region and determining priorities of projects, plans and programmes.

United Nations Children's Fund

12. Since the signing of the memorandum of understanding on cooperation between ECO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on 25 July 1994, joint workshops have been held on: (a) iodine deficiency disorder, at Ashgabat in June 1994; (b) breastfeeding and oral rehydration therapy, at Ankara in 1994; and (c) immunization, at Ashgabat in January 1995. To work out a future programme of action, consultations are in progress with UNICEF.

United Nations Population Fund

13. A memorandum of understanding was signed between ECO and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in New York in October 1994. Since then, ECO and UNFPA have jointly organized three events, namely: a conference on women's status and health, at Tehran in August 1995; a conference on reproductive health, at Islamabad in April 1996; and a conference on the implementation of Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, at Almaty in April 1996. UNFPA and ECO were planning to hold a conference on male involvement in reproductive health and family planning at Baku, Azerbaijan, in mid-1997.

United Nations International Drug Control Programme

14. ECO signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation with the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) at Islamabad on 15 March 1995 on the occasion of the third ECO summit meeting. Within the framework of the memorandum, UNDCP prepared a project proposal covering proposed technical assistance to implement the ECO Plan on Drug Control. Consultations are under way to finalize the project.

Specialized agencies

15. ECO also signed memorandums of understanding on cooperation with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in 1994 and 1995, respectively. A draft memorandum of understanding has been forwarded to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to formalize a cooperative relationship between ECO and FAO.

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Sustainable development and international economic cooperation

International migration and development, including the convening of a United Nations conference on international migration and development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In the context of its discussion of international migration and development, the General Assembly, by resolution 50/123, requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report containing concrete proposals on ways and means to address, from cross-sectoral, interregional, regional and subregional points of view, the issue of international migration and development, including aspects related to objectives and modalities for the convening of a United Nations conference on international migration and development. On 25 June 1996, a Cooperation Agreement was signed between the United Nations and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). By resolution 51/148, the General Assembly took note with satisfaction of the conclusion of the Cooperation Agreement and requested that it be informed, in the context of the report to be submitted pursuant to Assembly resolution 50/123, of the cooperation between the United Nations and IOM as it develops under the Cooperation Agreement. The present report responds to both requests of the General Assembly.

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, by resolution 49/127 of 19 December 1994, requested the Secretary-General to prepare, in consultation with all States and relevant international and regional organizations, a report on international migration and development, including aspects related to objectives and modalities for the convening of a United Nations conference on international migration and development. To obtain the views of Governments regarding the convening of such a conference, a letter indicating that responses were expected by 3 March 1995, was sent on 6 February 1995 to all Permanent Representatives to the United Nations. By 26 April 1995, responses had been received from the following Governments: Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Canada, Colombia, Croatia, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, France (on behalf of the 15 members of the European Union), the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Morocco, Norway, Peru, the Philippines, Romania, the Russian Federation, Switzerland, Thailand, Togo, the United States of America, Venezuela and Yugoslavia.

2. The responses of the above-mentioned Governments constituted the basis for the preparation of the report of the Secretary-General on international migration and development (E/1995/69) which was discussed by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1995, the findings of which were considered by the General Assembly at its fiftieth session. At that session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 50/123 of 20 December 1995, in which it requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report containing concrete proposals on ways and means to address, from cross-sectoral, interregional, regional and subregional points of view, the issue of international migration and development, including aspects related to objectives and modalities for the convening of a United Nations conference on international migration and development. In order to obtain the additional views of Governments, a second letter was sent in 1997 to all Permanent Representatives to the United Nations, inviting those Governments that had not responded to the letter sent in February 1995 to express their views on the issue of convening a conference, and informing those Governments that had responded to the previous letter that, if their views had not changed, a response was not necessary. In the 1997 letter, which contained a copy of the letter sent out in February 1995 and copies of the relevant resolutions, Governments were requested to express their views by 15 May 1997. Since the number of additional responses obtained by that date was low, a third letter was sent to all those Permanent Representatives to the United Nations whose Governments had not provided their views in response to the 1995 appeal or the 1997 request. The third letter was sent early in June 1997. As at 30 July 1997, the following Governments had provided additional responses regarding the convening of an international conference on international migration and development: Algeria, Armenia, Australia, Belarus, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Canada, Estonia, Ghana, the Holy See, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Latvia, Malawi, Malaysia, the Netherlands (on behalf of the 15 members of the European Union), Norway, Oman, Panama, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Ukraine and the United Arab Emirates. In addition, there were a number of Governments whose responses to the 1995 letter arrived too late for incorporation in document E/1995/69: Iraq, Lebanon, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Tunisia. The Governments of two countries, Mongolia and Seychelles, replied to the 1997 letter, stating that their capitals were considering the issue and that a complete response would be forwarded at a subsequent stage but, as at 30 July 1997, no further communication from those Governments had been received. The Permanent Representative of the Seychelles, however, indicated that international migration was not an issue commanding priority in that country.

3. In summary, 65 Governments expressed their views regarding the convening of a conference on international migration and development, and a further 2 acknowledged receipt of the 1997 letter. The present report is based on the views of the 65 Governments whose complete responses were received by 30 July 1997.

II. Views of Governments regarding a United Nations conference on international migration and development

4. Among the 65 Governments from which responses were received, 36 were generally in favour of convening a conference on international migration and development, 25 had strong reservations about holding such a conference, and a further 4, although somewhat more in favour of the possibility of convening a conference, considered that other options should first be pursued to address international migration issues and to explore areas in which international agreement could be reached.

5. Among the Governments that did not favour the holding of a conference, a widely shared view was that international migration and development issues had already

been the subject of discussion in several United Nations conferences and that scarce resources would be better used to ensure the implementation of the commitments made at those conferences than in convening another one. Particular mention was made of the relevance of the agreements on international migration reached at the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development, the World Conference on Human Rights, and the Regional Conference to Address the Problems of Refugees, Displaced Persons, Other Forms of Involuntary Displacement and Returnees in the Countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and Relevant Neighbouring States (also known as the CIS Conference). Several Governments further expressed the view that international migration and development issues should be addressed through existing mechanisms of the United Nations system, including the activities of the Commission on Population and Development, the Economic and Social Council, and the International Labour Organization.

6. The four Governments that expressed only partial support for the convening of a conference were mostly of the view that plans for a conference should not proceed without a clear articulation of and agreement on its objectives. Activities that may contribute to define those objectives include regional meetings and the technical symposium on international migration being organized under the auspices of the Administrative Committee on Coordination Task Force on Basic Social Services for All. One Government stressed that a necessary condition for the success of a conference was that the interests of sending, receiving and transit countries be served by it and that, if consensus proved difficult to achieve at the global level, a more realistic approach would be to pursue a process of regional consultations, ensuring that the regional groupings involved reflected migration realities and were not necessarily tied to the configuration of the regional commissions. The view that bilateral or regional negotiations were more likely to lead to meaningful ways of dealing with international migration issues was also expressed by some of the Governments that did not favour the holding of a global conference.

7. Among the 36 Governments that were generally in favour of convening a conference, the views regarding its possible objectives and the issues to be discussed varied widely. One of the issues most frequently mentioned (by 13 Governments) related to the protection of the rights of migrants, a task seen as being mostly the responsibility of the receiving State. To ensure such protection, a substantial number of Governments considered that a conference should reaffirm or build upon existing international instruments (10 Governments), or that it should revise existing international instruments (6 Governments). Four Governments suggested that a conference could elicit or promote the ratification of existing international instruments, and another three suggested that a conference could draft or provide a framework for the drafting of a new international instrument on international migration, be it in the form of a convention or a charter. Key international instruments that were mentioned as deserving reaffirmation or ratification were the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (General Assembly resolution 45/158, annex), the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention concerning Migration for Employment (Revised), 1949 (No. 97), and the ILO Convention concerning Migrations in Abusive Conditions and the Promotion of Equality of Opportunity and Treatment of Migrant Workers, 1975 (No. 143).[1]

8. A second concern that appears to be shared by a number of Governments relates to the management and control of international migration. That concern, however, finds different manifestations in the responses received. Thus, four Governments considered that a conference could suggest ways of reducing or preventing forced or involuntary migration; one Government was interested in reducing illegal migration, while another hoped that a conference might lead to the regularization of the status of illegal migrants; and a further four Governments expected that a conference might contribute towards improving the management of migration so that it could be reduced, stabilized or even eliminated. Four Governments suggested that a conference might contribute towards improving the management of international migration by ensuring that national policy or legislation conformed to international norms or standards.

9. A few other objectives of a possible conference were expressed by a sufficient number of Governments as to merit attention. Five Governments expected that a conference would provide terms of reference for bilateral or multilateral cooperation in relation to international migration, and two suggested that a conference might promote or yield bilateral agreements. Because most of the countries favouring the convening of a conference had been the source of substantial numbers of international migrants, some (six Governments) considered that more development aid and foreign investment ought to be directed to sending countries, and one suggested that countries of destination ought to compensate countries of origin for the costs incurred in reintegrating returning migrants or for the loss of skilled personnel. In fact, four Governments expressed the view that a conference

could be instrumental in reducing or stopping the outflow of skilled personnel from developing countries.

10. This overview indicates that even among the Governments favouring the holding of a conference there is lack of agreement regarding its goals and objectives. There is greater agreement on what the scope of a conference should be. Thus, among the 29 Governments that commented on the types of migrants that a possible conference should deal with, 23 considered that a comprehensive approach was required and that all types of migrants should be taken into account. Two Governments, however, suggested that issues related to refugees and other types of forced migration should not be treated at all, and another one stated that only refugees and illegal migrants should be the focus of a conference. In addition, a fourth Government said that the focus of a conference should be on migrants in a regular situation, and two other Governments stated that the focus should be on some of the categories of migrants covered by the CIS Conference.

11. The majority of Governments favouring the convening of a conference stressed the importance of having a discussion of a technical and analytical nature that would present a fair and objective assessment of the causes and consequences of international migration, of the major flows of international migrants, and of the positive and negative aspects of international migration in relation to development for both countries of origin and countries of destination. In fact, a few Governments stated that the conference itself should be of a technical and analytical nature. A view widely shared by Governments was that the formulation of effective recommendations for action had to be based on a solid understanding of the various aspects of international migration and development, and on reliable information regarding the multifaceted experience of the countries involved in the international migration process.

12. Regarding the main outcome of a conference, 15 Governments mentioned explicitly a plan of action and several others referred to recommendations, resolutions or decisions. There was also some support for the adoption of a declaration in conjunction with a plan of action. A number of Governments mentioned that a conference should result in an international consensus on a broad range of migration issues. Some, however, noted that such a consensus would not be easy to reach. Holding regional or even subregional meetings among Governments that shared similar positions or concerns regarding international migration was considered to be a valuable strategy to build consensus. Thus, virtually all Governments favouring the convening of a conference considered that regional meetings would be a useful if not a necessary part of the preparatory activities for a conference. There were, however, a variety of opinions expressed regarding the type of regional or subregional meetings proposed. Some Governments envisaged the holding of regional or subregional conferences of a political nature that would facilitate reaching a first level of agreement on difficult issues. Other Governments suggested that regional meetings should be technical in nature and attended by experts who would be in charge of preparing documents that reflected the regional approach to international migration issues. There was also a diversity of suggestions with regard to the number of regional meetings, with some Governments stating that there should be at least two meetings per region.

13. In addition to regional meetings, most Governments considered that there should be two or three meetings of a preparatory committee, the first one being an organizational meeting of short duration (two or three days) and the other two being working meetings of longer duration (one or two weeks each). Furthermore, a number of Governments expressed the view that expert group meetings should also be part of the preparatory process, since such meetings could provide the background papers and the analytical studies required for the formulation of action-oriented recommendations. A few Governments proposed that preparatory committees be appointed at the national level and that a report be prepared by each country, such reports to be used as inputs to regional meetings. Relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations were generally viewed as able to contribute their expertise to the preparatory process and thus most Governments favoured their active participation in both the preparations for the conference and the conference itself. Some Governments suggested that regional intergovernmental organizations could coordinate the preparatory activities in their respective regions.

14. Several countries proposed that the preparatory process should be similar to that preceding the International Conference on Population and Development, and a few countries also cited as valuable the activities organized in preparation for the CIS Conference. In fact, two countries indicated that the CIS Conference might be considered as part of the preparatory activities for a possible conference on international migration and development.

15. There was considerable variation in the views of Governments regarding the possible composition of a secretariat for the proposed conference. Recognizing that a number of United Nations bodies had mandates related to international migration and that other international organizations also played important roles in that field, a number of Governments suggested that the secretariat be

constituted by personnel from different United Nations bodies and relevant organizations. The Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat was mentioned by about one third of the Governments expressing a view on the issue. Other organizations mentioned slightly less frequently were the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the ILO. A few Governments suggested that the secretariat include representatives of States and that there be balanced regional representation in the secretariat.

16. Regarding the time allotted for the preparatory process, the 21 Governments that expressed an opinion on the issue were almost equally divided among those which thought that the preparatory process could be completed within 2 years (10 countries) and those which considered 1 to 1 ½ years to be sufficient (8 countries). Only three countries thought that two to three years might be necessary to prepare for the conference, once the decision to convene it had been taken. There were, in addition, a few Governments that expressed no opinion on the timing of the conference, stating instead that its timing would depend on the plans laid down by the preparatory committee. Thus, although a number of Governments stressed that it was important to ensure that the preparatory process was not rushed and that building consensus on highly controversial issues might be difficult, the general view was that the preparatory process should be of short to moderate duration. For comparative purposes, it should be noted that the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development took place 2 ½ years after the General Assembly decided to convene it; the International Conference on Population and Development was held nearly 3 ½ years after the first meeting of the preparatory committee; and the World Summit for Social Development took place slightly over 2 years after the General Assembly decided to convene it. With respect to the duration of the conference itself, 11 of the 19 Governments that expressed an opinion on the issue favoured a duration of one week (between five and seven days), but responses ranged from a minimum of two days to a maximum of two weeks.

17. Of the 36 Governments favouring the convening of a conference on international migration and development, 27 expressed a view regarding the issue of funding. Among them, 17 Governments suggested that a conference should be funded, at least in part, by special contributions from donor Governments. A few Governments specified that such donor Governments should be mainly the industrialized developed countries. The second most commonly mentioned source of funding was the United Nations, although the 15 Governments that mentioned it did not always indicate whether funding should come from the regular budget of the Organization. In a few instances, when the regular budget was mentioned explicitly, a proviso was made in the sense that plans for funding the proposed conference should be made in such a way as not to affect other programmes. In addition, several Governments mentioned the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) as possible sources of funding and others mentioned the specialized agencies, regional intergovernmental organizations or IOM. Three Governments suggested that all Governments participating in the conference should make contributions to its funding, for example, by means of a trust fund; several Governments included non-governmental organizations among possible sources of funding, and one suggested that fund-raising should be carried out among private enterprises.

18. Given the views on the possible sources of funding for a conference on international migration and development and the fact that most of the likely donor Governments have serious reservations about convening such a conference, the prospects for holding a conference are uncertain, especially if, in addition, the current lack of consensus on its objectives and goals is taken into account. Accordingly, it is important to review other mechanisms that may permit the issues of international migration and development to be addressed from a cross-sectoral, interregional, regional and subregional points of view.

III. Mechanisms to address issues of international migration and development within the United Nations system

A. Commission on Population and Development

19. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/128 of 19 December 1994, the Commission on Population and Development is responsible for monitoring, reviewing and assessing the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development,[2] reporting through the Economic and Social Council to the Assembly. In order to carry out a more efficient monitoring of the Programme of Action, the Commission, at its twenty-eighth session in 1995, adopted a topic-oriented and prioritized multi-year work programme. In accordance with that programme, the Commission, at its

thirtieth session in 1997, focused on the topic of international migration, with special emphasis on the linkages between migration and development. At that session, the Commission considered, *inter alia*, the findings of an in-depth report on international migration and development which covered the issue from a cross-sectoral and regional perspective, bringing together a wealth of information on various aspects of international migration and its interrelationships with development. The report will be published as part of the series of *World Population Monitoring* reports produced by the Population Division of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat.

20. At its twenty-eighth session, the Commission on Population and Development reviewed the activities of the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and recommended that such activities be expanded to include migration issues. It also called upon the Inter-Agency Task Force to present to the Commission, on an annual basis, a report on the activities carried out by the organs and organizations of the United Nations system to implement those parts of the Programme of Action related to the special topic being discussed. Consequently, in 1997, the Commission reviewed the activities of the United Nations system in relation to international migration on the basis of a report prepared by the Administrative Committee on Coordination Task Force on Basic Social Services for All, the body that had, in October 1995, superseded the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Implementation of the Programme of Action. The report noted, *inter alia*, that the Working Group on International Migration, operating under the Task Force, had agreed to organize a technical symposium on international migration that would take place in 1998. The Commission devoted considerable attention to that proposal, took note with interest of the holding of the symposium, provided guidelines on issues to be considered and urged that its participants be high-calibre technical experts from all regions. Further, the Commission requested the Chairperson of the Task Force to report to it at its 1998 session on the progress made in the organization of the technical symposium.[3]

21. Because a major thrust of the symposium is expected to be an analysis of the complex interrelationships between international migration and development, including experiences concerning policies on the management of migration, several Governments have noted that it is an important means of addressing the issue of international migration and development from regional and cross-sectoral perspectives. In fact, some Governments have suggested that, should a conference on the topic be convened, the technical symposium could be considered part of its preparatory activities. Undoubtedly, the holding of a technical symposium and the consideration of its conclusions and findings by the Commission on Population and Development provide important opportunities for the United Nations system to debate the issues involved and to assess the progress made in fulfilling the commitments made at the major international conferences that have so far dealt with such issues.

22. In summary, since its revitalization after the International Conference on Population and Development, the Commission on Population and Development has been continuously engaged in the consideration of international migration issues and is likely to remain so in the future through its role in monitoring, reviewing and appraising the implementation of the Programme of Action. With an expanded membership of 47 member States, the Commission provides a useful forum for the intergovernmental discussion of international migration issues from cross-sectoral and regional perspectives.

B. Commission on Human Rights

23. Within the United Nations, the Commission on Human Rights is responsible for reviewing the follow-up and implementation of the Programme of Action of the World Conference on Human Rights[4] and for addressing all issues related to the realization of the rights recognized in international human rights instruments or to the violation of such rights. The Commission also carries out studies, makes recommendations and drafts new international instruments. During its fifty-third session held in 1997, the Commission adopted resolutions 1997/14 and 1997/15 referring, respectively, to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, and to migrants and human rights.[5] In resolution 1997/14, the Commission called upon Member States to consider the possibility of signing and ratifying or acceding to the Convention as a matter of priority and requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission, at its fifty-fourth session, a report on the status of the Convention and on the efforts made by the Secretariat to promote the Convention and the protection of the rights of migrant workers. It also decided to include in the agenda for its next session an item entitled "Measures to improve the situation and ensure the human rights and dignity of all migrant workers".

24. In resolution 1997/15, the Commission decided to establish a working group consisting of five intergovernmental experts to meet prior to the fifty-fourth session of the Commission with a mandate to: (a) gather all relevant information from Governments, non-governmental organizations and any other relevant sources on the obstacles existing to the effective and full protection of the human rights of migrants; and (b) elaborate recommendations to strengthen the promotion, protection and implementation of the human rights of migrants. The report of the working group is to be submitted to the Commission at its fifty-fourth session. The two resolutions quoted indicate that the Commission on Human Rights is already taking steps to address one of the main concerns of Governments in regard to international migration: the protection of the human rights of migrants. Clearly, both because of its mandate and its expertise, the Commission is the body best suited to deal with human rights issues in relation to international migration.

C. Administrative Committee on Coordination

25. The General Assembly, in resolution 49/128, called upon the organs and organizations of the United Nations system and the specialized agencies to undertake the actions required to give full and effective support to the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. It requested the specialized agencies and all related organizations of the United Nations system to review and, where necessary, adjust their programmes and activities in line with the Programme of Action and take appropriate measures to ensure its full and effective implementation. The Assembly also called for the establishment of an appropriate inter-agency coordination, collaboration and harmonization mechanism for the implementation of the Programme of Action. In 1994, at the request of the Secretary-General, the Administrator of UNDP asked the Executive Director of UNFPA to convene and chair an inter-agency task force for that purpose.

26. In October 1995, the Administrative Committee on Coordination established three time-bound task forces as a means of achieving an integrated approach to the follow-up to the global conferences that had taken place. Each task force was to ensure coordinated support at the headquarters level for United Nations resident coordinators and United Nations country teams so that they could, in turn, effectively assist Governments and national institutions in pursuing the implementation of the goals and commitments of the conferences. The Administrative Committee on Coordination thus expanded the mandate of the previous inter-agency task force and reconstituted it as the Task Force on Basic Social Services for All.

27. At the request of the Commission on Population and Development, the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Implementation of the Programme of Action had established in 1995 a Working Group on International Migration, with the ILO acting as lead agency. The Working Group met twice: in October 1995 and in September 1996. It prepared a set of guidance notes, entitled "Issues in international migration" that provided information on current and future issues relative to international migration policy, agency profiles detailing activities on international migration, and guidelines on terminology and data. The guidance notes were distributed to all United Nations resident coordinators and posted on the Internet.

28. As noted above, in 1996 the Working Group proposed the holding of a technical symposium on international migration. The symposium is being organized by a steering group chaired by the ILO. It includes representatives of the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the regional commissions, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNFPA and IOM.

29. In pursuing its work in promoting the coordinated implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Conference of Human Rights, the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development,[6] and the Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women,[7] the Administrative Committee on Coordination, through its relevant subsidiary bodies, can play a key role in addressing international migration and development issues, particularly by bringing together the expertise that exists both within the United Nations system and in relevant intergovernmental organizations. The continued collaboration of the various United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and intergovernmental organizations in the field of international migration should, by fostering a cross-sectoral approach, improve the effectiveness of the system in providing support at the country level, and in guiding activities at the regional and subregional levels.

D. Committee for Development Planning

30. The Committee for Development Planning consists of a group of experts in planning theory and practice, serving in their personal capacities and not as representatives of States. The Committee's functions include the evaluation of United Nations programmes relating to economic planning and projections, making recommendations for the improvement of those programmes, and studying specific questions referred to the Committee by the Economic and Social Council, the Secretary-General or the specialized agencies.

31. In May 1997, the Committee for Development Planning decided to examine in 1998 the issue of migration and employment, focusing on: trends in international labour migration and their causes; the interrelationships between the spatial mobility of labour and globalization; the implications of changing labour migration patterns for developing countries; and the policy implications of such movements for both countries of origin and countries of destination. For its examination of the issues, the Committee established a working group that will meet in October 1997 to review the information available and prepare a report on the subject. The Committee thus represents a valuable mechanism within the United Nations system for the examination, from a substantive perspective, of issues related to international migration and development. Its findings and conclusions should be relevant for the consideration of the subject at the intergovernmental level, particularly because, given the expertise represented in the Committee, a cross-sectoral and pragmatic approach to an issue is ensured.

E. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

32. The mandate of UNHCR is to provide international protection and assistance to refugees and to seek solutions to the problems of refugees. The latter responsibility includes monitoring the well-being of returnees, that is, former refugees who have been voluntarily repatriated, especially in regard to the guarantees obtained on their behalf prior to their repatriation. Thus, UNHCR, while not a development agency, cooperates with other agencies in the promotion and implementation of rehabilitation programmes for returnee communities. In specific cases, UNHCR has also been requested by the Secretary-General or a principal organ of the United Nations to assist internally displaced persons who find themselves in refugee-like situations. The Office attaches great importance to the need to distinguish between population movements of a refugee nature and those of an economic nature. Increasingly, UNHCR has been developing ways in which to coordinate relief or repatriation efforts with reintegration, rehabilitation and development activities. The involvement of UNHCR in post-conflict situations ranges from initial reintegration and rehabilitation activities for returnees and their communities to limited legal, judicial and administrative capacity-building activities. The Office undertakes many protection and assistance activities jointly with other organizations, and particularly with non-governmental organizations.

33. The Executive Committee of the Programme of the High Commissioner, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly are the main intergovernmental bodies to which UNHCR reports and where issues related to refugees and other types of involuntary migration are discussed on a regular basis. Because the plight of refugees varies considerably from one region to another, UNHCR has generally adopted a regional approach in the search for solutions. Thus, UNHCR organizes, as necessary, special intergovernmental conferences to discuss refugee issues at the regional or subregional levels. The most recent initiative in that regard was the convening of the Regional Conference to Address the Problems of Refugees, Displaced Persons, Other Forms of Involuntary Displacement and Returnees in the Countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and Relevant Neighbouring States which was held in May 1996. The Conference was organized in collaboration with IOM, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. The Conference adopted a Programme of Action that includes guidelines for the development of an institutional framework in the CIS countries, the establishment and maintenance of an operational framework to meet the assistance and protection needs of beneficiary groups, and measures to prevent further involuntary displacement.

34. To provide a means of speedy and effective implementation of the above-mentioned Programme of Action in each of the countries concerned, UNHCR and IOM submitted in November 1996 a comprehensive joint appeal for funds to cover the activities of the two organizations in the 12 CIS countries during 1997. The activities proposed were based on national implementation plans drawn up in the CIS countries, in consultation with the Governments concerned. The Programme of Action calls for the creation of an intergovernmental steering group to monitor the follow-up to the Conference. The Group met on 2 July 1997

for a first annual review of progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action (after a preliminary meeting on procedural matters in October 1996). Participants agreed that significant progress had been made in several of the CIS countries, particularly in developing appropriate institutional frameworks and in the growing knowledge and effectiveness of the non-governmental organization sector. With respect to other countries, the need to establish a list of priorities regarding the implementation of the Programme of Action was noted. The slow response from the donor community to the joint appeal for funds was a cause for concern. Although the CIS Conference embodies a regional process that is likely to contribute to the solution of the problems shared by countries in the region and prevent further population displacement, the continued and deepened commitment of all participants in the process is crucial in order to ensure its success.

F. International Labour Organization

35. With respect to international migration, the ILO has been at the forefront in setting international standards for the treatment of migrant workers. The ILO has adopted a number of labour standards that apply equally to foreign workers and to nationals and it has also adopted two international conventions on the rights of migrant workers, namely, the Convention concerning Migration for Employment (Revised), 1949 (No. 97), and the Convention concerning Migrations in Abusive Conditions and the Promotion of Equality of Opportunity and Treatment of Migrant Workers, 1975 (No. 143), both of which are in force. Under its programme on international migration for employment, the ILO provides advice and training services to member States on various aspects of labour migration policy and administration, monitors labour migration trends and the conditions of employment of migrant workers in the different regions of the world, and promotes cooperation among countries of origin and countries of destination of migrant workers. It also undertakes research on a wide range of topics related to international labour migration, many of which are relevant for the understanding of its interrelationships with development as, for instance, the impact of remittances. To promote the exchange of information on labour migration policies and practices, the ILO organizes regional seminars and workshops, as well as round-table meetings, among senior officials of countries of origin and countries of destination. In its current work programme, emphasis is placed on the role of migrants within the global economy and their rights as workers.

36. The technical cooperation activities undertaken by the ILO have been designed to meet a variety of needs of member States, from strengthening the national administration dealing with migration to helping countries of origin to cope with the repatriation and reabsorption of migrants, especially under crisis conditions. The ILO also assists Governments in evaluating their policies, focusing especially on the effectiveness of measures to prevent abuses in recruitment and to combat discrimination against foreign workers. Technical assistance is also provided to Governments negotiating bilateral or multilateral agreements on labour migration. The ILO therefore plays a key role, not only in setting standards for the treatment of migrant workers, but also in contributing towards adherence to those standards through its technical assistance. Governments committed to ensuring respect for the rights of migrant workers can count on such assistance.

IV. Mechanisms to address international migration and development issues outside the United Nations system

A. The International Organization for Migration

37. Established in 1951, IOM is an intergovernmental organization currently comprising 59 member States and 48 observer States. Its Constitution, updated in 1989, is based on a number of fundamental principles, among which is the explicit recognition of the link between international migration and economic, social and cultural development. The mandate of IOM is to help ensure the orderly flow of international migrants; to promote international cooperation on migration issues; to aid in the search for practical solutions to migration problems by, among other things, providing a forum for discussion; and to contribute towards international solidarity by providing humanitarian assistance to migrants in need, be they refugees, externally or internally displaced persons, or other uprooted people.

38. Although IOM is not part of the United Nations system of organizations, it has held observer status in the General Assembly since 1992 and participates actively in coordination mechanisms established within the United Nations. In addition, on 25 June 1996, a Cooperation Agreement between the United Nations and IOM was signed and, since then, IOM has concluded other formal agreements with various bodies of the United Nations system. A

Cooperation Agreement with UNFPA was signed on 11 December 1996, an Executive Agency Agreement with UNDP on 13 December 1996, and a Memorandum of Understanding with UNHCR on 15 May 1997. In resolution 51/148 of 13 December 1996, the General Assembly took note with satisfaction of the conclusion of a Cooperation Agreement between the United Nations and IOM and requested that it be informed, in the context of the present report, on the cooperation between the United Nations and IOM as it develops under the Agreement.

39. The activities of IOM can be grouped into four major categories: humanitarian assistance for migrants in need; migration for development; technical cooperation; and research, information and forum activities on migration. With respect to humanitarian assistance, the closest operational partnerships of IOM within the United Nations system are with UNHCR. Traditional refugee resettlement continues to be one of the cornerstones of such collaboration. This entails IOM obtaining the necessary documentation, ensuring medical screening, arranging language training and cultural orientation, and providing logistical support for UNHCR resettlement programmes. Another important area of collaboration with UNHCR is the organized voluntary return of refugees to areas where conflict has subsided. For example, UNHCR requested IOM to take charge of overall operational and logistical arrangements for the return to the former Yugoslavia of persons who had been granted temporary protection in countries outside that region.

40. The work of IOM with the United Nations has become closer in recent years, especially in relation to humanitarian activities in emergency situations when large numbers of people have to be relocated, and during post-conflict reconstruction. The General Assembly has recognized the importance of the collaboration of IOM in those activities by inviting it to participate on a regular basis in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, a group responsible for the formulation of system-wide humanitarian policy and for ensuring that complex emergencies are dealt with through an integrated strategic approach. Such participation has led to close cooperation between IOM and the Department for Humanitarian Affairs, both at Headquarters and in the field, and has translated itself into better coordination and a more solid team-based approach to operational activities during humanitarian emergencies. The organization also takes part in the formulation of inter-agency appeals under the consolidated appeal process. Although IOM has access to the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, it considers it of limited usefulness because of the constraints imposed by the rules governing its use and because of the uncertainties involved in obtaining contributions to repay loans taken in the early stages of humanitarian emergencies.

41. The organization has also strengthened its cooperation with UNDP by acting as the executing agency for human development programmes in countries emerging from crisis and conflict, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Haiti, Mali and Mozambique. Its programmes to assist demobilized soldiers and their families have been a valuable input to post-conflict humanitarian operations led by the United Nations, especially in Angola, Haiti and Mozambique.

42. With respect to technical cooperation, building upon long-standing programmes in Latin America and other parts of the developing world, IOM has expanded its areas of activity in order to build the capacity of countries with economies in transition to develop and implement adequate international migration policies. It has provided technical assistance and training to a number of countries, and has fostered the sharing of experience among them. These activities constitute a major component of the joint implementation plan devised by IOM and UNHCR as a follow-up to the CIS Conference.

43. In the area of research, information and forum activities, IOM has just completed a major research effort documenting emigration dynamics and their causes in four developing subregions: sub-Saharan Africa; the Arab countries; Southern Asia; and Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean. This project had the financial support of UNFPA. Its findings are being published jointly by UNFPA and IOM and will be widely distributed. In addition, IOM collaborated with the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat in the preparation of a section for the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in the area of international migration (E/CN.9/1997/5), which was presented to the Commission on Population and Development at its thirtieth session. Given that the topic for that session was international migration, representatives of IOM attended and informed the Commission on the relevance of IOM activities for international migration and development. Lastly, as a member of the Working Group on International Migration of the Administrative Committee on Coordination Task Force on Basic Social Services for All, IOM has participated actively in the steering group in charge of organizing the forthcoming technical symposium on international migration.

44. The organization has also been active in providing Governments with various means of exchanging information and debating international migration issues. Addressing

growing concerns about migrant trafficking, IOM has organized a series of meetings to foster dialogue on that issue at the global, regional and subregional levels. After organizing in 1994 a major international seminar on migrant trafficking, held at Geneva, IOM organized an informal intergovernmental meeting for the Central American region which was held in Panama in 1995 and another one for South-East Asia, held in the Philippines in 1996. In dealing with migrant trafficking, IOM stresses the need to safeguard the basic human rights of the migrants being trafficked and to take measures to protect the well-being of women and children who are victims of trafficking. On this issue and other human rights issues relative to migrants, IOM collaborates closely with the Centre for Human Rights of the United Nations Secretariat and participates in the meetings of the Commission on Human Rights.

45. The Cooperation Agreement between the United Nations and IOM formalized and strengthened an ongoing collaborative relationship that is progressing along the various dimensions of IOM activity. Such collaboration allows the United Nations system to address specific concerns of its member States in the area of international migration by relying on the practical experience accumulated by IOM. As the close collaboration of UNHCR and IOM in the preparation and follow-up of the CIS Conference shows, IOM can play an especially useful role in aiding the system to address international migration and development issues at the regional level.

B. Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

46. International migration has long been a concern of the member States of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and such concern has been reflected in the activities of the organization. Under the direction of the Working Party on Migration, the Directorate for Education, Employment, Labour and Social Affairs has conducted a series of research projects dealing with the various economic aspects of international migration; it has facilitated intergovernmental dialogue through meetings and conferences; and it has instituted the Continuous Reporting System on Migration (SOPEMI) which allows the exchange and dissemination of timely statistical information on international migration to OECD countries. Two major OECD conferences have dealt with international migration and development: the International Conference on Migration held in Rome in 1991 and the Conference on Migration and International Cooperation: Challenges for OECD Countries, held at Madrid in 1993. They suggested that OECD member States consider assisting countries with strong emigration potential by promoting sustainable development and job creation. It was also recommended that the interrelationships between migration, free trade and regional economic integration be further explored. Accordingly, OECD has been studying the topic from a regional perspective. In 1996, a seminar focusing on Central and Eastern European countries was held at Vienna and another dealing with the Mediterranean Basin was held at Athens. In 1997, a third seminar focusing on Northern America will be held in Mexico. An international conference that will consider the results of the regional seminars will be held in early 1998.

47. The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of OECD has also requested studies on the linkages among aid, trade, employment and commercial policy, investment and other capital flows, the environment and migration. In response to this request, the Development Centre of OECD organized a Workshop on Development Strategy, Employment and Migration which took place in 1994. More recently, the DAC Working Party on Development Assistance and Environment has requested studies on environmentally-induced population movements to strengthen the capacity and coherence of donor Governments in dealing with such migration. That is, from the perspective of donor Governments, several issues of concern related to international migration are being dealt with, both from a cross-sectoral and a regional perspective, under the aegis of OECD.

C. Intergovernmental Consultations on Asylum, Refugee and Migration Policies in Europe, North America and Australia

48. The Intergovernmental Consultations on Asylum, Refugee and Migration Policies in Europe, North America and Australia provide an informal forum for the exchange of information and for policy coordination between the Governments of Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America. The Consultations were initiated in 1985 as a meeting of seven Governments which has developed into a multilateral consultation mechanism that still retains its informal character. An independent secretariat for the Consultations was established in June 1991. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and IOM

participate on an equal basis in the Consultations. Over 200 intergovernmental meetings have been held within the framework of the Consultations. Their main goal has been the search for innovative solutions and strategies to address the rapidly changing asylum, refugee and migration situation in the world.

49. A key strength of the Consultations process is that it is not a decision-making mechanism. Governments use it to determine issues of common interest or concern, and to explore policy options or discuss possible strategies for action without being compelled to agree on a common approach. A basic commonality of interest among the Governments participating in the Consultations may result in some policy harmonization over the long term but such harmonization is not an explicit goal of the process. Participating Governments recognize that there are significant structural differences among States and that solutions must be tailored to their particular situations. The exchange of information and experience among governmental officials dealing with specific issues is, however, found to be very valuable. The Consultations therefore provide a useful model for intergovernmental collaboration in the field of international migration.

D. Regional conferences on international migration: North and Central America

50. On 13-14 March 1996, the Government of Mexico convened an intergovernmental conference on international migration that brought together for the first time representatives of the countries of North and Central America to discuss migration issues. The Conference, held at Puebla, Mexico, was attended by representatives of Belize, Canada, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and the United States of America. Representatives of IOM, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, and the United Nations Population Fund also attended. The Conference adopted a joint communiqué, in which the countries represented committed themselves to safeguarding the human rights of migrants; combating trafficking in migrants, especially by establishing such trafficking as a criminal offence; and collaborating in various ways to enhance the control of migration. The Conference was viewed as a successful first step towards increased regional cooperation on issues related to international migration.

51. One year later, on 13 and 14 March 1997, a second regional conference was held at Panama City, Panama, and was attended by representatives of the same countries. The national reports presented at the conference underscored the usefulness of the dialogue initiated at the Puebla Conference and the need to promote it. The reports also showed that Governments had made substantial progress in implementing the commitments made at Puebla, mainly with regard to the adoption of legislation establishing trafficking as a criminal offence and with respect to measures aimed at ensuring respect for the human rights of migrants. At the Panama Conference, the Governments represented agreed to establish the Regional Consultation Group on Migration and adopted a Plan of Action to guide the activities of that Group. In addition, it was decided to hold a technical meeting in Costa Rica during the second half of 1997 and a third regional conference on migration was scheduled to be held at Ottawa, in the second quarter of 1998. Representatives of selected countries of South America and the Caribbean would be invited to attend the third regional conference as observers, and IOM was to continue to provide logistical support for the preparation of the regional conferences.

52. This initiative provides a useful example of a government-driven process of consultations and negotiations at the subregional level that, by bringing together countries that have a number of concerns in common, may lead to concrete measures to address them in a spirit of cooperation and true collaboration. According to the Plan of Action adopted in Panama, the activities envisaged include considerable sharing of information regarding policies and practices for the control of migration, as well as the discussion of practices regarding the consular protection of migrants. By institutionalizing such exchanges of information and ensuring that the momentum for action continues, the process may be successful in generating practical solutions to the difficult problems associated with some aspects of international migration.

V. Conclusions

53. International migration is a complex phenomenon that affects many aspects of the lives of people and societies, as well as the functioning of States. Its interrelationships with development are potentially quite varied and, as documented elsewhere,[8] many issues regarding those interrelationships remain unresolved. According to the views expressed by Governments, the relevant topics for discussion at an international conference on international migration are equally varied and complex. As the review of activities of

pertinent actors within and outside the United Nations system shows, efforts to address many of the issues that Governments wish to focus on have been made for a number of years and continue to be made through a variety of mechanisms. In particular, the concerns frequently expressed by Governments about ensuring respect for the human rights of all migrants and the need to set universally accepted standards regarding the rights of specific types of migrants, are being addressed through the mechanisms of the Commission on Human Rights.

54. International migration is an important issue for a large number of countries. Although a clear majority of the Governments that responded to the letter requesting their views favour the convening of an international conference on international migration and development, the number that responded is small when compared to the full membership of the United Nations.

55. The disparate experiences of countries or subregions with regard to international migration suggest that, if practical solutions are to be found, they are likely to arise from the consideration of the particular situation of groups of countries sharing similar positions or concerns within the global international migration system. Such a view is validated by the emphasis placed by Governments on the adoption of a regional or subregional approach to the preparation of an international conference. In the light of this, it may be expedient to pursue regional or subregional approaches whenever possible. The Regional Conference to Address the Problems of Refugees, Displaced Persons, Other Forms of Involuntary Displacement and Returnees in the Countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and Relevant Neighbouring States or the process of regional negotiations among the countries of North and Central America that began with the Puebla Conference in 1996 provide some examples of such an approach.

Notes

[1] See International Labour Office, *International Labour Conventions and Recommendations, 1919-1981* (Geneva, 1982).

[2] Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5-13 September 1994 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XIII.18), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

[3] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 5* (E/1997/25-E/CN.9/1997/11), chap. I, sect. C, resolution 1997/1.

[4] A/CONF.157/24 (Part I), chap. III.

[5] See E/1997/23-E/CN.4/1997/150, part one, chap. II. The full report of the Commission will be issued as *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 3* (E/1997/23-E/CN.4/1997/150).

[6] *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995* (A/CONF.166/9), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

[7] *Report of the Fourth Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1.

[8] Draft of *World Population Monitoring, 1997. Issues of international migration and development: selected aspects* (ESA/P/WP.132).